

Message Text

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PAGE 01 KINGST 04407 091331Z

61

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 MCT-01

AID-05 /063 W

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R 091230Z OCT 76

FM AMEMBASSY KINGSTON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2734

INFO AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN

AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN

AMEMBASSY NASSAU

AMEMBASSY PORT

AMEMBASSY PORT

C O N F I D E N T I A L KINGSTON 4407

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PINS, JM

SUBJECT: UPSWING IN VIOLENCE NOTED AS SECURITY FORCES WEARY

1. AS THE TIME FOR ELECTIONS APPROACHES (THOUGH NO SPECIFIC DATE HAS YET BEEN FIXED), THERE IS A MEASURABLE GROWTH IN TENSION, AND RENEWED VIOLENCE. ON THE EVENING OF SEPTEMBER 7, JAMAICA BROADCASTING CORPORATION (JBC) TV CARRIED AN ACCOUNT OF TROUBLES IN ST. ELIZABETH PARISH (IN THE SOUTHWESTERN QUADRANT OF THE ISLAND). ACCORDING TO THIS ACCOUNT, UNRULY CROWDS HAD BEEN DEMONSTRATING, OVERTURNING CARS AND SETTING THEM AFIRE. IN ORDER TO RESTORE ORDER, A TRUCKLOAD OF POLICE AND THREE HELICOPTER-LOADS OF TROOPS FROM THE JAMAICA DEFENSE FORCE (JDF) WERE SENT TO THE UNNAMED TROUBLE SPOT. THE ACCOUNT, WHICH WAS CARRIED ONLY BY JBC AND HAS NOT SURFACED IN THE NEWSPAPERS SO FAR, OFFERED A CONFUSED ACCOUNT REGARDING THE CAUSE OF THE INCIDENT, INCLUDING CITATION OF A MEETING TO INTRODUCE A PARLIAMENTARY CANDIDATE OF THE OPPOSITION JAMAICA LABOUR PARTY (JLP) TO THE VOTERS. (WE SUSPECT THAT THE INCIDENT OCCURRED SOMEWHERE IN THE ST. ELIZABETH SOUTHEASTERN CONSTITUENCY

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PAGE 02 KINGST 04407 091331Z

WHERE JLP HOPEFUL DAVID COKE WAS SCHEDULED TO BE "INTRODUCED"

ON OCTOBER 6.

2. THE ODD HANDLING OF THE NEWS OF THE ST. ELIZABETH INCIDENT IS INDICATIVE OF THE GOVERNMENT'S CONCERN OVER THE MEASURE OF GROWING POLITICAL TENSIONS, AND AN APPARENTLY RELATED UPSURGE IN VIOLENCE. IN KINGSTON, WE HAVE BEEN TREATED OVER THE LAST WEEK TO DISRUPTIONS AT FOOTBALL GAMES WHICH PLACED THE REFEREES IN SERIOUS DANGER. IN THEMSELVES PERHAPS NOT SERIOUS, THESE INCIDENTS ARE SYMPTOMATIC OF THE MEASURE OF INDISCIPLINE NOW EVIDENT. THEIR MOST TROUBLING ASPECT WAS A RESULTING CANDID ACKNOWLEDGEMENT BY ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER OF POLICE SYDNEY GIBBON THAT THE SECURITY FORCES - INCLUDING THE POLICE - ARE NOW TOO OVER-TAXED BY THE DEMANDS OF THE STATE OF EMERGENCY TO OFFER ADEQUATE PROTECTION TO PUBLIC EVENTS. WE HAD HEARD PRIVATELY THAT THIS WAS SO, BUT GIBBON MADE IT A MATTER OF PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE.

3. HOWEVER WEARY THE SECURITY FORCES MAY BE, THEIR EFFECTIVENESS HAS BEEN FURTHER ERODED BY GROWING FRICTION BETWEEN THE JDF AND THE POLICE. IN KINGSTON THIS FRICTION HAS LED TO VIOLENCE. TWO DAYS AGO POLICE SHOT DEAD AN OFF-DUTY SOLDIER, AN INCIDENT WHICH BROUGHT ABOUT POPULAR PROTEST AGAINST THE POLICE. ON OCTOBER 7 THREE POLICE WERE SHOT IN AN ENCOUNTER WITH WHAT ARE THOUGH TO HAVE BEEN OFF-DUTY MEMBERS OF THE JDF. THIS FRICTION HAS A HISTORY BUT ITS NEW ERUPTION NOW, AS TEMPER SHORTEN, IS AN UNHAPPY SIGN.

4. IT NEVERTHELESS REMAINS POSSIBLE TO HAVE PEACEABLE DEMONSTRATIONS IF THEY ARE OF THE RIGHT POLITICAL HUE. YESTERDAY, WORKERS IN THE "IMPACT PROGRAM", KNOWN AS "CRASHERS", GATHERED BEFORE THE OFFICES OF THE GLEANER TO PROTEST A STORY THE NEWSPAPER HAD CARRIED WHICH REPORTED THAT THE "CRASHERS" WERE REQUIRED TO PAY A PORTION OF THEIR EARNINGS TO THE RULING PEOPLE'S NATIONAL PARTY. THEY GATHERED, OSTENSIBLY SPONTANEOUSLY, TO IMPRESS UPON THE GLEANER THAT, IN VIEW OF THEIR DELIGHT AT BEING INCLUDED IN THE WPA-TYPE PROGRAM, THEY HAD VOLUNTARILY MADE THE CONTRIBUTION. AFTER SHOUTING SLOGANS AND WAVING PLACARDS, THEY DISPERSED. THERE WAS APPARENTLY NO TROUBLE AT

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 KINGST 04407 091331Z

ANY TIME DURING THE DEMONSTRATION.
DORRANCE

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